

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A digital signal processing apparatus, comprising:

transmitting means for transmitting inquiry information to an information center over a communication line, ~~said-the~~ inquiry information including a particular frame of music data extracted from encoded digital data ~~that have been recorded on an external storage medium that~~ has been loaded into said digital signal processing apparatus;

receiving means for receiving, from the information center over the communication line, a result of an inquiry that was conducted by ~~said-the~~ information center based on ~~said-the~~ transmitted inquiry information, the result of the inquiry indicating whether the extracted particular frame of music data matches a corresponding frame of music data stored in the information center, ~~the stored-frame of music data~~ stored in the information center being encoded or recorded in a manner consistent with the digital signal processing apparatus, the extracted particular frame of music data included in the inquiry information matching the ~~stored-frame of music data~~ stored in the information center only when the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium was encoded or recorded in the manner consistent with the digital signal processing apparatus and not matching the frame of music data stored in the information center when the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium was encoded or recorded in a manner inconsistent with the digital signal processing apparatus;

discriminating means for judging, based on ~~said-the~~ received result of ~~said-the~~ inquiry, whether ~~said-the~~ encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium was

encoded or recorded in the manner consistent with the digital signal processing apparatus and thus legally purchased data; and

controlling means for executing, in response to said discriminating means judging ~~said~~ the encoded digital data to be legally purchased data, a process to offer an additional service to ~~said~~ the customer,

the ~~said~~ additional service offered to ~~said~~ the customer by said controlling means including:

moving ~~said~~ the encoded digital data from said storage medium to another storage medium,

restoring ~~said~~ the encoded digital data onto said storage medium if the encoded digital data has been partially destroyed, and

converting ~~said~~ the encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium into encoded digital data of a different bit rate before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

2. (cancelled)

3. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means converting said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium with an algorithm of a predetermined version into digital data having undergone encoding with an algorithm of a more advanced version, before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

4. - 5. (cancelled)

6. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises furnishing said customer, free of charge, with a product related to a producing party who

produces said digital data purchased legally by said customer from said information center.

7. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising inputting means for inputting identification information for identifying said encoded digital data that are subject to said inquiry, wherein said identification information input through said inputting means is transmitted to said information center over said communication line.

8. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said information center comprises:

receiving means for receiving said inquiry information and said identification information transmitted from said digital signal processing apparatus;

retrieving means for retrieving digital data subject to said inquiry from said received inquiry information, the retrieved digital data subject to the inquiry including the extracted particular frame of music data;

reference inquiry information generating means for generating reference inquiry information corresponding to said retrieved digital data subject to the inquiry, the generated reference inquiry information including the stored frame of music data;

comparing means for comparing the generated reference inquiry information and the retrieved digital data subject to the inquiry;

inquiry result generating means for generating the result of the inquiry based on a result of the comparison by said comparing means; and

means for transmitting the result of the inquiry to said digital processing apparatus.

9. (cancelled)

10. (previously presented) The digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising charging means for processing charges; wherein, when said discriminating means judges that said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium are legally purchased data, said charging means charges one of nothing and a reduced amount on to said customer for said additional service offered to said customer.

11. (currently amended) A digital signal processing method, comprising:

loading an external storage medium into a digital signal processing apparatus;

transmitting identification information and inquiry information from the digital signal processing apparatus to an information center over a communication line, said-the identification information identifying encoded digital data that have been recorded on a-the loaded storage medium, said-the inquiry information including a particular frame of music data extracted from said-the encoded digital data;

receiving, at the digital signal processing apparatus from the information center, a result of an inquiry conducted by said-the information center based on said-the transmitted inquiry information, the result of the inquiry indicating whether the extracted particular frame of music data matches a corresponding frame of music data stored in the information center, the stored-frame of music data stored in the information center being encoded or recorded in a manner consistent with the digital signal processing method, the extracted particular frame of music data included in the inquiry information matching the stored frame of music data stored in the information center only

when the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium was encoded or recorded in the manner consistent with the digital signal processing method and not matching the frame of music data stored in the information center when the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium was encoded or recorded in a manner inconsistent with the digital signal processing method;

judging, based on ~~said~~ the received result of ~~said~~ the inquiry, whether ~~said~~ the encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium was encoded or recorded in the manner consistent with the digital signal processing method and thus legally purchased data; and

executing, in response to ~~said~~ the encoded digital data being judged to be legally purchased data, a process of offering an additional service to ~~said~~ the customer,

the ~~said~~ additional service offered to ~~said~~ the customer including:

moving ~~said~~ the encoded digital data from said storage medium to another storage medium,

restoring ~~said~~ the encoded digital data onto said storage medium if the encoded digital data has been partially destroyed, and

converting ~~said~~ the encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium into encoded digital data of a different bit rate before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

12. (cancelled)

13. (previously presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises converting said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium into encoded digital data encoded with an algorithm of a predetermined

version, before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

14. - 15. (cancelled)

16. (previously presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises furnishing said customer, free of charge, with a product related to a producing party who produced said digital data purchased legally by said customer from said information center.

17. (previously presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of inputting said identification information for identifying said encoded digital data to said inquiry, wherein said identification information input in said inputting step is transmitted to said information center over said communication line.

18. - 28. (cancelled)